

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley — United Church of Christ

February 2013

Pastor's Note



Dear Friends of CCAV-UCC,

Epiphany Greetings! We have started the season of Epiphany in the life of our church with an emphasis on light, unity and joy in God's presence.

Thank you for the many ways you have been able to be present to support our life together,

showing your light, unity and joy. I cherish seeing you each Sunday (those of you who are able to be present) and experiencing your extension of hospitality to all, long time, short time and new members!

Yes, I'm one of those new members and grateful for the welcome to membership held in worship on January 13th. I received a lovely church membership certificate, a white rose and a coffee hour "welcome" cake. It was a day to remember. I'm grateful to **Connie Moore** for leading the membership reception liturgy and to **Dave Harris**, representing our Membership Committee, for giving me an "official" membership certificate. Thank you to our **Coffee Hour hosts** for the special reception; the chocolate cake was delicious.

For me, the symbols of membership represent the signs and symbols of God's grace in and among us. The symbols represent your commitment to Christian hospitality to me and all people who desire to belong to the AVUCC church family. The symbols represent an expectation for me to take my part in the responsibility to be the church at its best.

In This Issue

Pastor's Corner	1
Welcome Visitor	2
Moderator's Message	2
Christian Education	3
Upcoming Events	4
Outreach	4
A Special Music Message	6
Church Facilities	7

What else? For me, it means the church is, on one hand, a very frail, human institution. We make mistakes, lots of them, but we do not stay stuck there. We rise above our mistakes (including hurts and disappointments) because we are also a strong resilient institution and we are not alone. God journeys with us as God journeyed with Magi of old. A recent wisdom quote comes to mind, "*Be humble for you are made of Earth. Be noble for you are made of stars.*"
Serbian traditional

We hope the *stars* part of who we are is the reminder that God has great hopes and expectations for who we are, the church, the family of God's people. Thank you for welcoming me into your spiritual family. As the song says, "*You are the church, I am the church, we are the church together.*" I look forward to welcoming others

God Is Still Speaking

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley — United Church of Christ

February 2013

who may decide, at some point, to join us on this sacred journey to be the best we can be, with God's help, the Congregational Church of Almaden Valley, UCC.

This month we enter the Season of Lent. I hope you'll attend the Joint Venture Ash Wednesday worship service at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 13th. **Rev. Kate** and I will look forward to sharing leadership and inviting you to begin the season with the mark of ashes. Also, look for some special TBA opportunities for spiritual growth and practice.

Thank you for continuing to welcome me as your new pastor and for allowing me to get to know you. I enjoy being invited into your homes and hearing any special needs you may have.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Michele Rogers Brigham

Welcome Visitor!

Whether you're visiting with us because you're looking for a church, or accompanying a friend or family member, we bid you a hearty welcome!

We welcome all who would join us on our journey—for a day, a week or a lifetime—to discover who we are now and who we can become on this road of faith and inquiry.

We embrace our diversity of thought and scriptural understanding. We respect and honor all who seek to be in covenant with us as we share in the joys and responsibilities of our church family.

We are a warm and friendly bunch, but we're not perfect! So, if in our excitement to greet our church family members, we forget our manners, please talk to us, introduce yourself and ask us lots of questions! And if you want to dig deeper and learn more about our church, please visit us at : www.CongregationalChurchOfAlmadenValley.org.

We hope you'll return to us soon!

Moderator's Note

It was a joy to welcome **Pastor Michele** into our church family this past Sunday. It has been a while since we have welcomed a new member! We celebrated after the service with a delicious chocolate cake.



Committees and Volunteers

CCAV has gotten off to a good start in 2013. We have organized several committees and the 2013 CCAUCC committee list will be posted on the membership photo board soon. You will notice that we are in need of some volunteers for the Fellowship/Events Committee. This group would help when there is to be a

God Is Still Speaking

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley – United Church of Christ

February 2013

fellowship event within our church facility. *Please note that the Caring Committee will still take care of memorial services, food, & rides for members who are ill.*

In addition, I'd like you all to be aware that this year we will be looking at the job descriptions and guidelines for our committees in an attempt to make them more realistic for our current needs. Hope you can help!

Special Fellowship Event Coming

A fellowship event will be coming up in March! I am speaking of Pastor Michele's installation. I have never attended one, and I understand it will be quite a celebration!! Please, let me know if you are interested in helping with the Fellowship Committee.

Thank you,

Connie

Christian Education

Know it in your head, stow it in your heart, show it in your life and sow it in the world.

Sunday School is beginning to burst at the seams! We anxiously wait to be in some sort of classroom with a little elbow room. Maybe you noticed we tried meeting in the hallway outside the Christian Education office. That was fine when only four or five children showed up. But January brought us nine students each week. And with 16 students officially registered for our program we have to prepare accordingly. It takes a little ingenuity and creativity every Sunday, but we manage

to squeeze everyone into the CE Office for class and when we need to stretch a bit we sneak into the choir room when it's empty. Growing is exciting and challenging. Don't you just love it? I sure do!!

Spring Lessons

With the Christmas Pageant and Epiphany Celebrations behind us and the teachers all moving along nicely in our winter lessons, I am starting to organize our spring lessons and planning another teacher workshop. In these workshops we all learn better ways to present our faith stories, engage our students in learning, manage behavior, and enjoy sharing with one another. These workshops are open to all, not just our teachers and shepherds. If you think you might like to participate in such an opportunity, let me know or watch for more information on dates and times.

Our Wonderful Staff

We are blessed with 10 wonderful teachers and shepherds that share the Good News with our children and are ready to expand our program as the need presents itself. Watch your weekly bulletins for who is teaching and what we are studying.

And don't forget that you, too, can invite families to our churches and introduce them to our Sunday School program. I have lots of exciting things planned for our future.

In Your Faithful Service,

Susie Ferguson

God Is Still Speaking

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley — United Church of Christ

February 2013

Upcoming Events

Special Sundays

During February look for these special Sundays:

- February 3–9
UCC Women's Week
- February 10
Racial Justice
- February 17
Science, Faith and Technology
- February 24
Seminary and Church Vocations

Ash Wednesday JV Service: February 13, 7:00 p.m.

Please plan to begin the Season of Lent by joining with our respective worship communities (CCVUCC and ECA) in worship for prayers, reflections and the imposition of ashes. Rev. Kate Flexer and Rev. Michele Rogers Brigham will lead worship together and be grateful for your presence to mark the beginning of this holy season.

Lenten Study

On the following Wednesdays at 6 p.m.—Feb. 20, 27 and Apr. 6, 13, and 20—we will gather to study and share a light supper. **Rev. Kate** and **Rev. Michele** are leading a five week Lenten study group entitled *Who Is My Neighbor?* We hope you'll plan to join us!

Outreach

Christmas Eve Communion at the Santa Clara County Jail

Last Spring at our NCNC (Northern CA Nevada Conference of the UCC) Annual Gathering, I attended a workshop presented by Chaplain Evelyn Vigil on *Hope and Help: A Faith-based Response to the Release of Prisoners in Your Community*. Evelyn, an MDiv graduate from PSR (our UCC seminary in Berkeley) and a partner in ministry at Foothills Congregational UCC in Los Altos, has served as the facility chaplain for the main jail—a maximum security jail—that houses up to 1400 men (and I would add, a handful of women) who adhere to a variety of faiths.

During the workshop, Evelyn shared with the group that on the day before Christmas and Easter, every inmate is offered Communion. To make that happen, volunteers are needed to help. I knew that I wanted to be part of that team, even though Christmas Eve would not be the most convenient day for anyone to do that. Days, weeks, and months went by and thankfully—on the last day to receive security clearance for participation—Evelyn who e-mailed me to be at the jail at 7:00 a.m. on the 24th. I had several questions in my mind, some of which were: Where to park? Exactly how to get there? What to wear? What was permitted for a visitor to bring into the facility? How long would the experience be?

One might wonder why the early arrival hour. I later learned that breakfast is served at 4:30 a.m. and lunch

God Is Still Speaking

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley — United Church of Christ

February 2013

at 9:00 a.m., medications are dispensed at regular times to many inmates, as well as many other scheduled activities. Communion would need to be sandwiched in between whatever else was usually going on.

I arrived at the jail with time to spare, and parked where I believed was possible (Yes, I'd checked ahead of time), only later finding a citation on my windshield. Being one who likes to have a good idea of what might be the drill, I was relieved to find the front desk officer welcoming. He found my authorized name on the list, I gave him my driver's license to keep till I left, and he gave me the required badge. I was not there too long before a couple from Foothills came who would also be serving. I learned that there are lockers for visitors to use. I met other volunteers from St. Andrew's Church, St. Jude's, Cathedral of Faith, as well as the Simpsons from Foothills."And, Evelyn with her warm heart, joyful nature, and welcome sense of humor, joined us.

There seemed to be doors and more doors through which to pass, and no buttons inside the elevators. One uses hand signals in front of an overhead camera to indicate the desired floor. We all walked down to Evelyn's office on the lower level. There we helped ready the elements—grape juice and wafers—to be offered by intinction. A paper cup was used because experience had revealed that it was safer than a sturdier one. We had a brief Communion service ourselves, met the woman who directs the education program, and set out in groups. I was with the man from St. Andrew's, a person who volunteers often on a one-to-

one basis with inmates. Evelyn continued to be with us when she wasn't called away. We went first to the maximum security area where inmates came one at a time and were separated from us by a glass door. There was a small opening lower on the door through which we offered the dipped wafer along with words of hope and comfort. Each inmate was called by name—they either volunteered the information or the unit officer did. We introduced ourselves by our first names. The inmates thanked us and returned to their cells. We went next to the psychiatric unit where there were also several women. The officer in charge was very good-natured and welcoming to us. He wrote in his log book that we were there to lift spirits.

He also accompanied us to individual cells where we found several folks without clothing; in those cases the inmates were told to put something on, and some wrapped themselves in a blanket. We visited one clearly psychotic woman whose words about religion seemed to convey some anger and more. I was really moved by Evelyn's ability to cut through what was being said and ask if the woman would like prayer; "Yes," was the answer, and Evelyn shared with her heartfelt words that God was ever present in her need.

We went also to a room where a Spanish-speaking service was being held for members of the Norteno and Sureno gangs—inmates who reportedly fight when together. The young men courteously offered chairs to us which they had brought downstairs to the meeting area. We weren't there too long before the men were called back to their cells for awhile because

God Is Still Speaking

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley – United Church of Christ

February 2013

a fight had broken out, and all the guards in the area were needed to quell it. When the men returned to the room, the service resumed.

We were unable to visit some other areas because of programming. I was at the jail for about three hours, fully realizing that others, including Evelyn, would be there much longer. For me, the experience was a very meaningful start to Christmas Eve, having the feeling that in some small way spirits had been lifted.

Phyllis Chai

A Special Music Message

As I pondered about the New Year, new life, and eternity, such thoughts formed into words.

Symphony of Life

A gaze out the window...

I saw the trees

or perhaps the trees saw me,

for they waved their branches at me.

Drawing me to a space of peace...

A stroll among the trees...

I heard the trees

or perhaps the trees spoke to me,

for the whispers seemed to say,

"You are me, I am you."

"I too wonder about eternity,

I too strive to grow upward, offer beauty, exude fragrance of glorious life!

And pray, with all the good intention that is in me, that I may surpass myself from this moment to the next...

wondering, if I keep climbing this invisible thread that which seems to connect me to the Heavens, I may live eternally."

A brush on my ankle...

I bowed down low.

A humble little flower

shyly offered her smile.

"I am the tree, the tree is me."

I found myself murmur,

"She may grow to be a tree... the tree will eventually fall, decay, and die...

that other flowers may be nourished... to grow again."

At the thought of death and futility of life,

a thin veil of sadness was about to wrap my head, when suddenly,!!

A shock to my heart

made me freeze in one spot.

A bright sense of calm,

slowly penetrated through my being.

"To live eternally means to die for others.

I am them, they are me!"

God Is Still Speaking

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley — United Church of Christ

February 2013

Then a glorious symphony of sounds!
The trees singing, “I am you, you are me.”
The flower humming, “I am the tree, the tree is me.”
And I, harmonizing,
“I am them, they are me.
I am you, you are me.
We are us!”

Perhaps, this is life of eternity... here on earth and very much so elsewhere.

Kristal Kim
Director of Music

Church Facilities

Reverend Michele's Office

The carpet in Rev. Michele's office is damaged in the sitting area. Might you have a small (6–9 ft) area rug in pastel colors to donate or loan? A circular shape would be nice. A second request would be for a table-type lamp for her desk. Thanks for considering these requests.

Carla Gerber

Construction Update

The end is near! At long last, work has resumed on the repairs to Old Fellowship Hall (the new Conference and Learning Center), the nursery and classrooms. What may you ask was the hold up? After getting a clean bill of health on the mold, lead and asbestos removal, the crew started insulating—then the rains

came, and we learned that the leaks responsible for the damage were still leaking. The roof issues are being addressed, and the leak has been stopped. We then had to have the insulation and electrical work inspected by the City—we passed! The crews have now finished the insulation, drywall, lighting, and priming the walls. Painting is up to us and we'll need some volunteers to help move stuff out of Old Fellowship Hall—so, if you're handy with a roller and brush, or can help with moving, please contact **Dave Byers**. Once the paint is on the walls, the flooring, cabinets and appliances can be installed; and, by the end of the month, we'll have a beautiful new space to use and enjoy. Thank you to everyone for your patience and understanding; and a big THANK YOU to **Dave Byers** for overseeing this project!

Kalos Publication

Kalos appears on the CCAVUCC website and in a few printed copies for those who request a mailing. If you would like *Kalos* to be sent to your home, please contact **Sue Scaff** (sscaff@sbcglobal.net or 960-4452).

We encourage you to share stories and inspirations in our newsletter! Tell us about your experiences, your reflections, your hopes for the church, anything of interest to the community that you would like to share. Send us images, poems, links for our Inspiration section. We want to hear from you!

To submit an article, send it by the 15th of the month to kalos@ccavucc.org. *Kalos* editors are **Sue Scaff**, **Connie Moore** and **Risa Feely**.

God Is Still Speaking

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley – United Church of Christ

February 2013



God Is Still Speaking